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Summary record of the 12th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 9 October 2018, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Saikal ..... (Afghanistan)
later: Mr. Kováčik (Vice-Chair) ..... (Slovakia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 70: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) A/73/41 and A/73/278)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/73/174, A/73/257, A/73/272 and A/73/276)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (continued) (A/73/223)

1. **Ms. Winter** (Chair, Committee on the Rights of the Child) said that the Committee had devoted its recent biennial day of general discussion to the topic of protecting and empowering children as human rights defenders. Children wanted to be informed about their rights, to be able to exercise them, to be taken seriously and to be safe. The Committee had ensured their participation in both the discussions leading up to the event and the event itself. They had expressed deep concern about the increasing number of children escaping from war, violence and political turmoil, about violence in all of its forms, about discrimination against girls and ethnic and minority children and about preventable environmental harm.

2. Introducing the report of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (A/73/41), she said that all States but one had ratified or acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. During the past year, the pace of ratification of the Optional Protocols had been alarmingly slow, however. There had been only one accession to the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, two accessions to the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and four accessions to the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure, bringing the number of States parties to the three Optional Protocols to 168, 175 and 40, respectively.

3. Reporting could also be improved. Of the 100 initial reports due under the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, 42 were more than 10 years late. The Committee had received only two new reports under the Optional Protocols that year. The reporting situation for the Convention itself was only slightly better, as 18 periodic reports were more than five years overdue. She once again encouraged Member States to avail themselves of the capacity-building programme provided by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to help States fulfil their reporting obligations.

4. The Committee had held three sessions in 2018 and had reviewed and adopted concluding observations on 27 States parties' reports. Once again, the reports had revealed a need for much stronger efforts to implement the Committee's recommendations. Despite the 26 new reports received, the backlog stood at a still manageable 35. With regard to the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure, the Committee had found violations in three cases, declared three cases inadmissible and discontinued three cases. It had received 90 cases and registered 22, bringing the cases pending consideration to 44. Of those, 22 were ready to be considered but had been postponed because of staffing constraints, translation requirements and insufficient meeting time.

5. The Committee had carried out its first inquiry mission in January 2018 and had adopted the inquiry report at its seventy-eighth session. It was grateful to the Government of Chile for agreeing to make the report public and for the cooperation extended during its visit.

6. During its seventy-seventh session, around 50 States had attended the Committee's tenth annual informal meeting with States. Discussions had focused on, inter alia, the launch of the two joint general comments with the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; the Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty, the simplified reporting procedure, budgetary allocations for children's issues, the new structure of the concluding observations and the revision of general comment No. 10 (2007) on children's rights in juvenile justice. In line with General Assembly resolution 68/268, the Committee had started offering States parties the option of submitting reports under the simplified reporting procedure. So far, nine States had done so, and the first lists of issues prior to reporting had been sent in June 2018 to Croatia and Hungary.

7. During their most recent meeting, the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies had decided to appoint a focal point to facilitate discussions in each committee with a view to preparing a common treaty body contribution to the 2020 review of the treaty body system. In its review, the General Assembly should be guided by the need to strengthen the protection of rights holders; to preserve the integrity of the treaty body system and the independence of the committees and their experts; to improve the implementation of treaty obligations and treaty body recommendations and to ensure that steps taken to align procedures and working methods did not interfere with their specific mandates.

8. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General on the status of the human rights treaty body system

(A/73/309), the committees had been allocated insufficient staff to meet the workload targets, especially for individual communications, and other mandated activities had proved far more costly and labour-intensive than anticipated. To improve the system, resources provided for treaty bodies must be commensurate with their workloads, and the webcasting of treaty body sessions and reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities should be funded from the regular budget. If future resource allocation was not commensurate with the growth of the system, the Committee would not be able to keep up with its work under the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure, leading to a new backlog and defeating the purpose of the Optional Protocol.

9. **Ms. Yasunaga** (Japan) asked what challenges the Committee faced for further harmonization with the other treaty bodies, what steps it was taking and, on the eve of the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention, how the Chair saw the Committee's future.

10. **Ms. Wagner** (Switzerland), encouraging all States to ratify the three Optional Protocols, said that it welcomed the focus on children's rights in the context of international migrations and the ongoing work on children deprived of liberty. Although Switzerland was encouraged by progress in children's education and health care, it remained gravely concerned about regressive practices in juvenile justice and urged States to abolish the death penalty for persons under age 18. She would like to know what climate change-related dangers posed the most immediate risks for children.

11. **Mr. Whiteley** (Observer for the European Union) said that the European Union welcomed the Committee's efforts to contribute to the strengthening of the treaty body system and its decision to adopt a new format for its concluding observations. He would like to know the state of play of the work on the proposed new general comment on children's rights and the digital media, what major issues it might address and whether they would include Internet pornography. With regard to its revision of its general comment No. 10 (2007) on children's rights in juvenile justice, he would like to know what changes the Committee was considering.

12. **Mr. De La Mora Salcedo** (Mexico) said that his delegation welcomed the adoption of general comments Nos. 22 and 23 jointly with the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and wished to stress that Mexico did not institutionalize children with disabilities. Regarding the pervasive misunderstanding of children's right to inclusive and quality education, he would like to know the minimum requirements for ensuring such education.

13. **Mr. Kent** (United Kingdom) said that the protection and promotion of children's rights formed an integral part of the United Kingdom's domestic and international human rights agenda. In 2018, it had launched the Leave No Girl Behind campaign for girls' education, in addition to endorsing the Safe Schools Declaration and the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers. The United Kingdom was also a key donor to the Education Cannot Wait initiative, which aimed to make education an integral part of humanitarian responses. In November 2019, it would host an international meeting on preventing sexual violence in conflict addressing, inter alia, improved support for children born of rape. He asked how States could be encouraged to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration, as well as to provide information on measures taken to monitor their children's rights budgets at all levels of government.

14. **Ms. Winter** (Chair, Committee on the Rights of the Child) said that, in regard to collaboration with other treaty bodies, her Committee and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities had established a joint working group to explore the possibility of a joint general comment. However, OHCHR allowed each treaty body only one general comment per year, and, as matters stood, it was difficult to tell whether they would be allowed another in addition to the joint general comment. The Committee was collaborating with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and several non-governmental organizations on possibilities for celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention. Together with the International Institute for Child Rights and Development and the University of Geneva, it was working on plans to hold one event per month in every city in Switzerland.

15. There were still seven countries that allowed death sentences for people who had been under the age of 18 at the time of their crime. The most pressing climate change-related issues for children were clean water, land and air. In that connection, the Committee often drew attention to its observations on children and the business sector and tried to work with Member States to determine how social partners could work together.

16. The simplified reporting procedure was easier for the States parties but harder for the Committee, which had to compile the list of issues before receiving any information from the State. Furthermore, the States had shown very little interest in availing themselves of the procedure.

17. Digital media was a two-edged sword. It could be used to harm children, and it could enable disabled children and children in remote areas to receive an education. Regarding safe schools, she urged States to endorse and abide by the Safe Schools Declaration.

18. With respect to general comment No. 10 (2007) on children's rights in juvenile justice, the Committee would probably revise the recommended minimum age of criminal responsibility upward from 12 to 14. Unfortunately, some countries were tending towards lowering that age, especially for migrant children. No child asked to flee his or her country, and no child should be imprisoned for violating immigration law. The best interests of the migrant child should always be the highest priority.

19. **Ms. de Boer-Buquicchio** (Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material) said that States had a duty to protect migrant children by translating the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration into action. Deploring the rise of xenophobic discourse and the disregard for the fundamental human rights of migrants, she expressed particular concern at the growing numbers of Rohingya child refugees being sold into marriage or sexual exploitation.

20. Her report to the General Assembly (A/73/174) presented a thematic study on combating and preventing the sale and sexual exploitation of children through the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals from a children's rights-based perspective. During the first three sessions of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, insufficient attention had been paid to the rights of children and their protection from violence, including sale and sexual exploitation. Furthermore, the voluntary national reviews had provided little information on the implementation of Goal-related commitments, in part because the review process did not harness existing accountability mechanisms such as the treaty bodies, the special procedures and the universal periodic review. Furthermore, the goal of ending violence against children was insufficiently integrated into development agendas. While children were repeatedly described in national reviews as a particularly vulnerable group, there was a general lack of analysis and disaggregated data regarding efforts to protect them.

21. It was essential to ensure that the next revision of the *Handbook for the Preparation of Voluntary National Reviews* took a human rights-based approach and called for institutionalized national accountability processes that allowed meaningful participation for all groups. For example, the revised *Handbook* should advocate the inclusion of statistical tables based on global and nationally developed indicators, especially in areas where data was lacking. States should be advised to draw systematically on human rights mechanisms and make systematic reference to their recommendations.

22. Data was at the heart of any accountability effort, yet there was little information on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, in part because of its hidden nature and in part because of the lack of dedicated national accountability mechanisms. The Goal indicators presented an opportunity to fill that data void. Top priority should be given to standardizing definitions and categories through the adoption of the *Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse*. The Special Rapporteur stood ready to collaborate in the upcoming reviews of the Goal indicators and in the development of national and regional sets of indicators.

23. States should include information in their voluntary national reviews on expenditures for action plans, coordination mechanisms, and prevention and response services for the protection of children. In addition, they should teach children about the Sustainable Development Goals, especially those that referred to them, and should launch national consultation processes to give children a voice in how the 2030 Agenda was implemented.

24. The review of Goals 8 and 16 during the 2019 session of the high-level political forum would provide a crucial opportunity to ensure that children were not left behind. Furthermore, as the thirtieth anniversary year of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2019 would be an opportune time to integrate children's rights into the 2030 Agenda review and follow-up mechanism.

25. **Ms. Swatz** (South Africa) said that her delegation shared the Special Rapporteur's concerns regarding the absence of standardized categories for the forms of violence against children, and it agreed on the need to integrate ending violence against children into development agendas and to mainstream the protection of their rights across the special procedure system. Despite Government efforts, South African families and communities continued to be plagued by the sale and sexual exploitation of children. Her delegation would therefore be keen to learn from other delegations about how their countries had succeeded in addressing and gathering data on those scourges.

26. South Africa was concerned about the use of the Internet and social media for trafficking in women and children. The industry must work with States to prevent

such abuse, and States must invest resources and enact and implement effective laws.

27. **Ms. Miller** (United Kingdom) said that, as a member of the WePROTECT Global Alliance to End Child Sexual Exploitation Online, the United Kingdom was committed to securing real change. In a recent speech, the Home Secretary had had announced an extra £21 million to bolster the response of national law enforcement agencies and had called for increased industry, government and civil society cooperation. The United Kingdom had pledged £50 million over five years to the Fund to End Violence against Children, beginning in 2016. It had allocated nearly £2.2 million in 2018 to its Child Trafficking Protection Fund, which was testing innovative ways to support trafficked children at home and abroad. Domestically, it had recently announced an additional £2 million to expand the independent child trafficking advocates service. She asked what measures could be taken to encourage States to ratify and implement the Convention and its Optional Protocols.

28. **Mr. McElwain** (United States of America) said that his delegation shared the concern that many Member States were falling short on their shared commitment to end the sale and sexual exploitation of children. The United States worked closely with partner States, civil society and faith-based organizations to combat such crimes through various government agencies and offices, including the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons of the Department of State and the Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section of the Department of Justice. The United States Agency for International Development was currently revising its counter-trafficking in persons policy to prioritize the education and economic empowerment of child survivors. It was also leading a strategy to provide a comprehensive, coordinated response across government. The United States regularly published three detailed documents containing comparable international data on the sale and exploitation of children. He asked what actions stakeholders could take to combat the exploitation of children in the near term.

29. **Mr. Whiteley** (Observer for the European Union), stressing the commitment of the European Union member States to combating all forms of violence against children, said that his delegation would appreciate further information on how a children's rights approach could be applied to the voluntary national reviews and the need for indicator data. It would also like to know how the upcoming thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 2019 focus of the high-level political forum could be used to advance the promotion and protection of children's rights.

30. **Mr. Kelly** (Ireland), urging all States to cooperate fully with the various special procedures, said that Ireland had been pleased to welcome the Special Rapporteur earlier that year and looked forward to receiving her report. He would like to know how Member States could fully integrate the views of children when working to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

31. **Ms. Andújar** (Dominican Republic), noting the Special Rapporteur's visit to her country in 2017 and subsequent recommendations, said that the Dominican Republic had recently enacted a law setting the minimum age of marriage at 18, and it was taking steps to prevent sexual exploitation in the tourism industry and assist the victims, including through a strategic partnership between the entity responsible for tourism security and the National Council on Childhood and Adolescence. It was also working with UNICEF to establish goals for the prevention, investigation and prosecution of commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents and had launched a campaign to encourage reporting. In addition, it was implementing a 2017–2020 national action plan against trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants, and it had joined the WePROTECT Global Alliance to End Child Sexual Exploitation Online.

32. **Mr. De La Mora Salcedo** (Mexico) said that his country had taken significant steps to protect children against all forms of violence by adopting a children's rights law and establishing a national system for their protection. It was a pathfinding country in the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children and a member of the WePROTECT Global Alliance. He would appreciate recommendations for strengthening relationships between international alliances and the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

33. **Ms. de Boer-Buquicchio** (Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material), responding to the representative of South Africa, said that it was indeed important to consider children's rights across all of the Sustainable Development Goals. Cooperation with the private sector was essential not only in the information and communications technologies but also in other areas such as travel and tourism, where child sexual exploitation was on the rise.

34. She welcomed the United Kingdom's strong commitment to eradicating online abuse through the WePROTECT Global Alliance. Regarding ratification

of the Optional Protocols, many countries held back pending necessary legislative or institutional changes. Rather than waiting, they should proceed with those changes in parallel with their preparations for ratification, in order to benefit from the assistance of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

35. She appreciated the work of the numerous United States offices and agencies dealing with issues covered by her mandate, as well as the data they provided on trafficking in children. However, she was concerned about a common misunderstanding of the criminal acts that fell under her mandate. Legally speaking, sale of children and trafficking in children were not the same. To simplify, sale always involved a commercial transaction, while trafficking could be accomplished by deceit, force or abduction. Also, trafficking aimed to exploit the child, while sale might not, as in the case of illegal adoption. Different proofs were required for the two categories of crimes, and cross-border movement was treated differently. Stakeholders should work not only to prevent the sale and exploitation of children but also to provide appropriate assistance for victims.

36. Indicator data was essential to measure progress on ending the sale and exploitation of children. The indicator cluster in the *Handbook on the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography* provided an indication of the kind of data required. It would need to be collected for many different crimes, which should probably be described in more child-friendly language. It should be disaggregated by sex, age, ethnic group and geographical location and should include the number of cases identified, investigated, prosecuted and resulting in convictions. By providing such data, the State also demonstrated that it had a proper accountability system, which was what really mattered. As for celebrations, the best way to mark the anniversary of the Convention would be by ratifying and implementing its Optional Protocols. It was her dream that children's rights would someday gain the same prominence on the international agenda as women's rights had achieved.

37. During her recent visits to the Dominican Republic and Mexico, her interlocutors had attached welcome importance to children's participation in the development of policies and legislation. She hoped that the Dominican Republic had adopted the law establishing 18 as the minimum age of marriage, which had been before parliament during her visit. Responding to the representative of Mexico, she said that international alliances such as the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children and the WePROTECT Global Alliance were very valuable, but she did not know to what extent they contributed to the high-level political forum since she had not yet attended a session. She hoped to attend the next one, which would focus on children's rights.

38. In closing, she encouraged Member States preparing voluntary national reviews to give greater attention to children's rights and, in particular, to the sale and sexual exploitation of children, which had been largely ignored in the reports submitted thus far.

39. *Mr. Kováčik (Slovakia), Vice-Chair, took the chair.*

40. **Mr. Nowak** (Independent expert for the Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty) said that, although he had been appointed to head the Global Study in October 2016, its implementation phase had been delayed until early 2018 because of insufficient funding. He had devoted most of 2017 to fundraising, and with the support of the Group of Friends of the Global Study, approximately $1 million had been raised. However, the Study was operating on essentially one fifth of its total budget, and he once again called on Member States to step up their support.

41. The Global Study was being conducted by a team at the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights, which coordinated nine research groups across all continents and enjoyed the assistance of United Nations agencies and a growing number of non-governmental organizations. A total of six consultations had taken place, and four others would soon follow. In February 2018, OHCHR had sent a questionnaire to the Member States and other stakeholders, which it had followed up with a reminder in June 2018. Noting that only 85 replies had been received, he urged States that had not yet done so to respond quickly.

42. In 2019, the Study would enter its final phase. The research groups would conduct desk research, and the data would be consolidated into different chapters. In March 2019, a final expert meeting would be held to review all of the information gathered. It would include members of the Advisory Board, leads of the different research groups, members of the United Nations Interagency Task Force on the Global Study and, very importantly, children, who were experts in their own rights.

43. He was deeply convinced that the Global Study would have a tremendous impact on the hitherto inadequately addressed situation of children deprived of liberty. With the rise of immigration detention, it was a matter of increasing urgency. The Study aimed to bridge the data gap on the number of children behind bars and raise awareness of the risks for society as a whole. It would also include best practices and evidence-based recommendations. Deprivation of a child's liberty was

more than just a breach of international obligations. It seriously harmed not only the child but also society at large.

44. **Mr. Bastida Peydro** (Spain), noting that his country had responded promptly to the questionnaire, said that the Spanish juvenile justice system complied with the Convention. The system of prison sentences established in the Spanish Penal Code applied only to persons ages 18 or older. Minors under age 14 were not considered criminally responsible, and minors over 14 could be deprived of liberty only if convicted of violence against persons, terrorism, sexual assault or homicide. Children were never detained for immigration violations. He would like to know if the Global Study team had consulted with children deprived of liberty.

45. **Ms. Swatz** (South Africa) said that her country had submitted its initial response and would submit the final one once it had been duly approved. The Global Study had provided an excellent opportunity to take stock of where it stood with regard to children deprived of their liberty. In view of the benefit that all Member States could gain from the Study, her delegation called on all stakeholders to provide the needed human and financial resources.

46. **Ms. Konzett-Stoffl** (Austria) said that Austria had been among the first to contribute financially to the Global Study, and she encouraged others to do so as well. The first regional consultation had taken place in Warsaw under the Austrian chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in the context of the 2017 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. The process of responding to the questionnaire had led to a better understanding of the situation of children deprived of liberty in Austria. Her delegation paid tribute to all of those helping to make the Study possible, particularly the non-governmental organizations that were working pro bono.

47. She asked for further elaboration on the need for data on how many children were deprived of liberty and the reasons and the circumstances of their detention and the need for the data to be gender-specific. In addition, she would like to know how States could be encouraged to complete the questionnaire and whether any of the key actors in the Study could provide assistance.

48. **Mr. De La Mora Salcedo** (Mexico) said that, as his country had indicated in its response to the questionnaire, Mexican juvenile justice law complied with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. His delegation would appreciate recommendations and good practices for preventing the stigmatization of children who had been deprived of liberty and promoting their social reintegration.

49. **Ms. Wagner** (Switzerland), noting that Switzerland had been among the first supporters of the Global Study, said that her delegation was pleased with what had already been accomplished despite insufficient funding and encouraged all Member States to consider contributing to it financially. The Study would provide them with valuable information on the situation of children deprived of liberty and would lay the groundwork for legal, policy and practical recommendations. She wondered if any general trends had already emerged from the Study and whether they confirmed the Independent Expert's initial hypotheses.

50. **Mr. Whiteley** (Observer for the European Union) said that the European Union had contributed €300,000 to the Global Study and had devoted the annual European Forum on the rights of the child to the topic of children deprived of liberty. The European Union Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child addressed the development of alternatives to detention, and its Communication on the protection of children in migration stressed that detention should be used exclusively in exceptional circumstances, where strictly necessary, only as a last resort, for the shortest time possible and never in prison accommodation. He wondered if there were problems specific to migrant children in detention and whether the Study would examine the situation of children who had been sentenced to death. He would also appreciate further information on the data collection work.

51. **Mr. Rohland** (Germany), speaking also on behalf of France, said that France and Germany remained concerned by the deprivation of children's liberty across the globe and looked forward to the presentation of the Global Study in 2019. They were resolved to strengthen their efforts to protect such children and had supported the Study politically, practically and, in the case of Germany, financially.

52. **Mr. Nowak** (Independent expert for the Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty) said that children deprived of liberty had been insufficiently consulted, owing to extremely limited funding. He was grateful to the European Union for having included children in the November 2017 regional consultation, and he hoped that more children would participate in the upcoming consultations in Montevideo, Tunis and Jamaica, as well as in the March 2019 expert meeting, so that the Global Study could reflect the voices of children worldwide. However, children's participation posed ethical, methodological and financial challenges, since it was important to protect them both during and after their participation.

53. The thematic consultation in Pretoria had provided a valuable opportunity to explore the challenges of compiling the data, much of which had never been collected before and would prove useful for South Africa itself. To fill the global data void, he urged all States to complete the questionnaire, despite the level of detail and the problems posed. Help was available, from OHCHR and, especially, the field offices of United Nations agencies. Data gathering should be a joint effort. Furthermore, it should not end with the Study. Up-to-date data and data trends were vital as a basis for meaningful recommendations.

54. The questionnaire asked for sex and age-disaggregated data. Sex-specific data was important to determine, for example, if the percentage of female detainees in the total detainee population was the same for girls as for women and whether it varied with the type of detention.

55. Children deprived of liberty were invariably stigmatized, often for the rest of their lives, with very negative consequences for their development, mental and physical health and social rehabilitation. Therefore, one of the Study's goals was to identify good practices for promoting the social reintegration of children who had been deprived of liberty.

56. Without Switzerland, its first supporter, there would have been no Global Study. He would give very high visibility to it and to all of the States and organizations that were contributing financially, and he hoped that the small Group of Friends would continue to grow. Unfortunately, he had no results to share as yet, since the research teams were only beginning to analyse the replies received.

57. Migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking children had usually been traumatized by their journey and, in the case of refugees, the circumstances from which they were fleeing; depriving them of liberty exacerbated the trauma. He had received information about children who had been sentenced to death for national security-related offences or ordinary crimes. Under both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, children had an absolute right not to be subject to the death penalty.

58. **Mr. Djani** (Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that the Committee should focus its deliberations on establishing strong commitments to continued support for global efforts to eradicate poverty and promote health and education; to ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children, and to promoting investment in education and training, particularly in the context of the digital economy. It was committed to strengthening its partnership with the United Nations and would work to ensure that the draft resolution on children was actionable.

59. ASEAN was committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda through ASEAN Community Vision 2025. Its highest priority was to create conditions that would enable the region's children to engage actively, productively and constructively in the region and the world. While the member countries had made great strides in reducing extreme poverty, poverty remained their most persistent challenge.

60. To promote inclusiveness and a greater sense of community in the region, ASEAN had developed a connectivity master plan and was committed to building sustainable food, water and energy infrastructure as well as disability-friendly infrastructure. Its commitment to children's well-being was demonstrated by, inter alia, its regional guidelines on combating trafficking in children, child marriage, online exploitation of children and school bullying. It also emphasized national birth registration, national legislation prohibiting violence against and children and improved protection, support services, rehabilitation and reintegration into the community for victims/survivors.

61. **Ms. Plepytė** (Lithuania), speaking on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic countries, said that violence against children was an issue of the utmost concern. The Nordic and Baltic countries prohibited all forms of violence against children, including corporal punishment, and they encouraged other countries to do the same. They also challenged attitudes and social norms supporting violence through awareness-raising campaigns and partnership with parents, teachers and community leaders.

62. They recognized their obligation to provide inclusive education to children with disabilities, who were more vulnerable to violence, exclusion and discrimination than others. They also recognized the importance of sexuality education, which empowered young people to demand their right to health, enabled them to make informed decisions about their lives and fostered respect for human rights and diversity.

63. The Nordic and Baltic countries had adopted legislation and policies on bullying in schools and had established comprehensive national programmes to strengthen capacity to combat bullying for teachers and other professionals working with children. Measures to prevent cyberbullying must be continually updated in order to keep pace with technology.

64. It was essential to ensure children's access to knowledge and to empower them as agents of change, capable of contributing to the full implementation of their own rights and to the strengthening of the international human rights framework. Engagement of all actors, including children themselves, was necessary to consolidate the notion that children's rights were human rights, as well as to protect those rights.

65. **Mr. Whiteley** (Observer for the European Union), speaking on behalf of the European Union and its member States; the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, reiterated the call for States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child to withdraw any reservations to it or its Optional Protocols and to ratify the third Optional Protocol on a communications procedure. The Convention guided European Union policy, legislation and funding programmes. The European Union was committed to ensuring that all children enjoyed their human rights, with special emphasis on disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginalized children, and to combating all forms of violence against children, as evidenced by the European Commission's 10 principles for integrated child protection systems. Through its Europe 2020 strategy, it was stepping up efforts to prevent child poverty, social exclusion and the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

66. The European Union supported initiatives to give all children access to at least 12 years of quality education, and at the international level, it was scaling up funding to ensure that children in humanitarian emergencies had access to education. The Communication on education in emergencies and protracted crises, adopted in May 2018, committed it to supporting safe, inclusive and quality formal and non-formal education for children in protracted crises, as well as alternative pathways for return to education and the integration of displaced children into host-country education systems, including through support to host communities.

67. Mindful of the specific risks of children in situations of armed conflict, the European Union had taken a comprehensive range of measures for their assistance. To combat harmful practices affecting girls, it supported the UNICEF-United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) programmes to end child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation. In September 2017, it had launched the European Union-United Nations Spotlight Initiative, committing €500 million to eliminate violence against women and girls, and it was also leading the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies.

68. The Communication on the protection of children in migration, adopted in April 2017, proposed European Union actions and included recommendations for strengthening the protection of migrant children in member States. The European Union would promote compliance with existing international legal obligations in relation to the rights of children and would uphold the principle of the best interest of the child at all times.

69. The European Union remained committed to supporting anti-trafficking objectives within and outside its borders, including addressing the specific needs of child victims. It would continue to encourage States to criminalize those who knowingly used services exacted from victims of trafficking and to support national authorities in their efforts to step up investigations and prosecutions and enhance law enforcement and judicial cooperation.

70. It continued to support the establishment of child-friendly justice systems and was working with partners to strengthen alternatives to detention. It supported quality alternative care solutions for children deprived of parental care and encouraged efforts to address the root causes of children's separation from their families. Administrative steps would be taken to ensure that every child was property registered and issued with the documents to prove it, without prejudice to the question of permanent residency or acquisition of citizenship.

71. In November 2017, the European Union had participated in the fourth Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour, where it had endorsed the Declaration on Child Labour, Forced Labour and Youth Employment. In the context of the 2030 Agenda, it supported the efforts to end child labour in all its forms by 2025.

72. **Mr. Escalante Hasbún** (El Salvador), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that its member States reaffirmed the Convention on the Rights of the Child as the highest standard for the promotion and protection of the rights of children. While the region was recognized as a leader in that field, its mostly middle-income countries were still working to address vulnerabilities due to poverty, inequality, discrimination, the effects of the global financial crisis, natural disasters, violence, organized crime, people smuggling and drug and human trafficking.

73. Education was a human right, a social investment and one of the most important public goods for

achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Quality education for all was essential to combat inequality and build the human capital needed to turn demographic transitions into dividends that reduced poverty and generated prosperity.

74. The CELAC member States were concerned by the situation of migrant children, particularly unaccompanied minors, and recognized the importance of coordination among countries and international organizations to address the complex reasons for their migration. They condemned the recent policies of separating migrant children from their parents. In accordance with the best interests of the child, migrant children should not be detained.

75. The CELAC countries called on all States to ensure that minority and vulnerable children had access to medical care, social services and education, without discrimination and regardless of migration status, and received appropriate protection and assistance.

76. Violence against children was widespread and had a lasting impact on their lives, generating enormous costs for society. It including the various forms of bullying, from actual violence to social exclusion and cyberbullying. The United Nations syste n should continue to support States' efforts to end bullying of all kinds.

77. International organizations should help States step up their efforts to promote healthy early childhood development by developing early childhood programmes. Stronger international efforts and cooperation on early childhood development and nutrition were needed to break the cycle of poverty and achieve sustainable development.

78. States should ensure that children who were marginalized, vulnerable or subject to stigmatization, discrimination or exclusion could realize their human rights. For all children to realize their rights fully, implementation of the 2030 Agenda was essential. Advancing global efforts to eradicate poverty would require the international community's firm commitment, the mobilization of all necessary resources and a multifaceted approach to the promotion and protection of the children's human rights.

79. **Ms. Wagner** (Switzerland) said that more must be done to close the gender gap in education. Switzerland was concerned about the surge in grave violations of children's rights in conflict. It made ensuring that children could continue their education in protracted emergencies a priority area of its bilateral and multilateral efforts and had recently been elected to the steering group of the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies. It had also been a member of the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children since its establishment in 2015.

80. Switzerland attached great importance to the protection of children's rights in the justice system and to the international standards on juvenile justice. Children deprived of liberty were subject to violence and sexual abuse and often denied their rights to education and health, making them more susceptible to violent extremism. In recent years, a growing number of children had been recruited and exploited by terrorist or violent extremist groups. Switzerland supported the Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty, and it was continuing to work with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to develop guidance materials on dealing with and ensuring justice for recruited or exploited children.

81. **Ms. Oehri** (Liechtenstein) said that the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the global compact on refugees promoted existing international legal obligations in children's rights and upheld the principle of the best interests of the child at all times. However, it was up to the Member States to deliver on their commitments. Recalling that children made up almost a third of human trafficking victims, she urged universal ratification of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. In her latest report (A/73/278), the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict pointed to an increase in the number of verified cases of each of the six grave violations against children. Her delegation reiterated its strong support for the Special Representative's mandate and the need to protect its independence and integrity. Any interference, such as political pressure from Member States, seriously jeopardized the independence and integrity not only of that mechanism but also of all other special procedures.

82. **Ms. Karugu** (Kenya) said that her country reaffirmed its commitment to the Convention and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, as well as to attaining all of the Sustainable Development Goals associated with the protection and promotion of the rights of children. Free and compulsory basic education was a constitutional right, and Kenya currently allocated more than a quarter of the national budget to education. Key policies such as free primary and secondary education and an emphasis on inclusive education had led to improved access, retention and gender equality.

83. The President's new Big Four agenda focused on universal health care, food security, manufacturing and affordable housing, all geared towards improving the well-being of the vulnerable. Kenya had implemented free maternal health care and had expanded comprehensive immunization programs, leading to a reduction in maternal, infant and child mortality. Legislative and institutional mechanisms had been put in place to protect children from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, and a wide range of child-related and child-friendly social protection schemes were being implemented. Both child marriage and female genital mutilation had been criminalized, and female police officers were deployed to respond to cases relating to the abuse of girls. Additionally, an information management system had been set up to centralize children's data in the context of child protection services.

84. **Mr. Antonini** (Italy) said that Italy, the birthplace of the Montessori method of early childhood education, had a long tradition of supporting the principle of the best interest of the child. Children's health, education and social inclusion were core priorities of Italian development cooperation, which focused on improving children's living conditions, protecting them from all forms of abuse and violence and ensuring access to education and early childhood care. Italy developed programmes to provide inclusive education and training, foster talents and assist the most disadvantaged. It also strongly supported UNICEF and UNFPA.

85. His delegation called on the Member States to take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect children from all forms of violence. [Like the others in the core group introducing the annual draft resolution on the rights of the child,] it attached the utmost importance to combating harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

86. Italy was gravely concerned about the recruitment, training and use of children by armed groups, and during its Security Council tenure in 2017, it had endeavoured to ensure the strongest possible safeguards for children in conflict situations. It had also played a leading role in negotiating the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the global compact on refugees. If elected to the Human Rights Council, it would be a strong voice for children's rights.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.